

CELEBRATING WEST VIRGINIA DAY

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I call to the Senate's attention that on June 20, 147 years ago, a 35th State was added to our great Nation: West Virginia, whose birthday is a time for us to remember proudly our state's rich history, culture and unique qualities.

Nearly 150 years ago, West Virginia became the only State to have seceded from a Confederate entity to join the Union. Each year after, West Virginia has continued to develop its own identity and contribute to our Nation's fabric. Our State's history, past and present, is rich with development and progress that fills West Virginians with pride every day.

West Virginia's mountainous terrain, countless river valleys, and rich natural resources have driven our State's history and economy, and draw visitors from across the globe. Our State possesses timeless landmarks and attractions, and has an abundance of natural beauty to share.

President John F. Kennedy once said, "The Sun does not always shine in West Virginia, but the people always do." This statement is a true testament not only to the kind and hospitable nature of our citizens, but also to our fortitude, determination and abiding faith.

Though a "stranger to blue water," West Virginia has been no stranger to turmoil throughout its history. We have been and will continue to be undaunted in overcoming the challenges of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

This year we stood together to face the tragic explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine that claimed the lives of 29 miners and left a community and our whole state in mourning, calling again on the steadfast spirit of our people. The devastating effects of the explosion left mining families holding their breath for news of loved ones. Rescue teams and the State's Red Cross and Salvation Army expeditiously rose to the challenge to offer much needed support. True to custom, West Virginians across the State were ready and remain eager to lend a helping hand to their neighbors affected by the disaster.

And this year, like so many others before, we have called on the West Virginia National Guard to serve the State when we need them most, and to perform invaluable duties outside our borders—providing security on a global scale. Our West Virginia National Guard has garnered top rankings for readiness for many years, showcasing the motivation and commitment behind each one of our men and women serving our country.

West Virginia possesses the unique ability to make the traditions we have historically treasured as much a part of our bright future as our accomplished past. Our State continues to retain its culture as an integral part of our identity. Festivals and events, like Bridge Day at the New River Gorge

Bridge in Fayetteville and the Vandalia Gathering in Charleston, bring older and younger generations together to enjoy State treasures and traditions. Blues festivals can be found across our State, and from Martinsburg to Mullens you can find world-class artisans and craftsmen in the fields of glass blowing, classic woodwork, and folk art.

Thanks to West Virginia's dedication to education, our academic institutions consistently bring new discoveries to the fields of science and technology. And, our athletic programs continue to rank among the best in the country. West Virginia University's men's basketball team reached the Final Four in this year's NCAA Basketball Tournament representing the state on a national stage. And, football fans across our state eagerly await an upcoming football season that promises to be successful for all of our programs in West Virginia.

There is so much to honor, celebrate, and be thankful for on West Virginia's 147th birthday. Our past, present, and future are as colorful as our Appalachian hills in autumn. Our people know and live well by our motto—Montani Semper Liberi—"Mountaineers are always free," and our strong work ethic, one of God and family, and indubitable spirit makes our country and our State great. With these words ever present, and on behalf of myself and my fellow West Virginians, I proudly wish the happiest of birthdays to my home State, West Virginia.

TRIBUTE TO STEVE KIMBELL

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to honor Vermont's leading policymaker, Steve Kimbell, who announced his retirement on May 20 of this year. For over three decades, Mr. Kimbell has been a major presence within the political world of Vermont and is noted as the most respected and influential policy maker to walk the halls of our Statehouse.

Mr. Kimbell started his career as a lawyer at Vermont Legal Aid after completing his juris doctor from the University of Michigan Law School. Only a few years later, he was hired as lieutenant governor candidate Madeleine Kunin's campaign manager and went on to be her State planning director after she was elected Governor. Mr. Kimbell then partnered with Governor Kunin's former press secretary Bob Sherman to form Kimbell Sherman Ellis, a government and communications company that has grown into the most successful firm of its kind in the State. Kimbell Sherman Ellis developed a nationwide clientele and has additional offices in Washington, DC and Massachusetts. Along with advising and policymaking for Vermont State government, the firm provides legislative and regulatory strategy in government affairs and manages marketing and public relations campaigns nationwide.

Steve Kimbell has been credited with helping to shape almost every piece of major legislation to pass through the Vermont Statehouse. I offer my congratulations to Mr. Kimbell upon his retirement. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article from the Rutland Herald that depicts the contributions that Steve Kimbell has made to the State of Vermont.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Rutland Herald, May 30, 2010]

POLITICIAN'S POLITICIAN

[By Peter Mallary]

Steve Kimbell can be tightly wound. But the other day sitting in his office at Kimbell, Sherman & Ellis—the Montpelier-based government and communications firm he started with Bob Sherman back in 1987—he looked completely relaxed. It is a small office, which he shares with his partner's son, Nick Sherman. Kimbell's chair was kicked back. His smile was broad and available.

Steve Kimbell just quit his job.

"I never expected to work forever," he said.

Well, you could have fooled most of us.

And he has.

In most cases more than once.

Kimbell is the politician's politician, a lobbyist and counselor who has built relationships unlike any other in Vermont's political world.

He started out as a Legal Aid lawyer.

"I spent my time suing state government," he said. "Mostly welfare and Medicaid cases."

And he remains a government skeptic.

"My underlying personal philosophy is that government is very dangerous," Kimbell said. "It's a huge operation. And it breaks the law every day. This is the foundation of my advocacy for every client. All citizens need to be watchdogs. But we get paid to do it."

No shock to any who know him—Steve Kimbell's decision to retire is a political one. He tied it to Jim Douglas' decision not to run for a fifth term. He pointed out that a political shift like the one we may see this election cycle only comes along every decade or so. Whatever happens there will be a new political cast. So it seemed to him like the right time to give a different generation a chance.

There was nothing sudden about his decision. The partners in the firm have been planning for this for a year. But wary of making Kimbell a lame duck in his final legislative session they kept the story close, a remarkable accomplishment in a town that does not guard political secrets particularly well.

Not at all, most of the time.

I asked him if he could really quit.

"I have gotten up and gone to work for 40 years," he said, "either working for myself or somebody else. It will be a major change but it's worth a shot."

He says he is going to tend the farm in Tunbridge.

I am not 100 percent convinced.

Kimbell's career spans the terms of every governor since Tom Salmon—Salmon, Snelling, Kunin, Snelling again, Dean and Douglas.

He reflected.

"Governors are not noted for their sense of humor," Kimbell said, referencing a quality he values in politicians—politicians like Art Gibb, Bob Gannett and Ralph Wright.

"Snelling made an art form of being the intimidating presence in the room."